

David Wimble Council Update

Kent County Council Cabinet Member for special projects and economic development

February: A Month in the Life of a County Councillor

In this month's update I thought it might be useful to do something slightly different and give readers an overview of what a fairly typical working month looks like for me as a Cabinet Member at Kent County Council. People often see the headlines around council meetings or major announcements, but much of the work happens behind the scenes through briefings, site visits and long days of meetings across Kent and occasionally in Westminster.

Most working days start early. I normally leave home around **7am** and head to **Sessions House in Maidstone**, which is the main headquarters of Kent County Council. The first hour is usually spent catching up on emails and briefing notes. On a normal day this can easily run into dozens of messages from officers, councillors, businesses and residents raising issues that need attention.

February was particularly busy as it was **budget month**, which is one of the most demanding periods in the council calendar. In the lead-up to the budget we held a number of preparatory briefings. One of these took place on the Sunday prior to budget week, when cabinet members met with the Leader to go through sections of the proposed budget and clarify any questions before the formal meetings began.

Mondays usually begin with the **informal cabinet meeting**, which typically lasts around three hours. This meeting allows cabinet members to review the previous week's work, discuss priorities for the coming week and present **FED papers (forthcoming executive decisions)** relating to their portfolios. It is also a useful opportunity for cabinet colleagues to raise emerging issues before they move to formal decisions.

The rest of the month consisted of a mixture of strategic meetings, local casework, site visits and regional events covering economic development, infrastructure, health and energy.

February Meetings and Engagements (In Date Order)

Monday 2 February

- Informal Cabinet meeting – weekly strategic review and FED papers
- Meeting on **rural broadband rollout** to improve connectivity in rural Kent
- Leader's briefing on the new "**Grow in Kent**" brand, replacing Visit Kent and other tourism promotion bodies
- Strategic meeting regarding the **Sealink interconnector project at Pegwell Bay**

Tuesday 3 February

- **Council of Governors meeting – NHS University Trust**, discussing governance and health service oversight
- Travel to **Westminster** for meetings with Kent MPs regarding **economic development, employment and job creation**
- Returned home around **8.30pm**

Wednesday 4 February

- **Kent and Medway Advisory Board – 8am start**
- **Dungeness Power Station Stakeholders Meeting** discussing energy and local impact
- Travel back to **Westminster** to pitch for a **£20 million innovation bid supporting sustainable farming**
- Arrived home around **9.40pm**

Thursday 5 February

- **Weekly officer briefing** with lead officers covering portfolio updates and progress reports
- **Budget briefing** session ahead of formal meetings
- Update from the **DOLGE efficiency team** outlining savings of approximately **£82 million since taking control of the council**
- **Maidstone East Strategic Planning Meeting**
- **Hybrid meeting with KCC Reform backbench councillors**, finishing around **9pm**

Friday 6 February

- **Full day budget preparation meeting** reviewing proposals ahead of cabinet and council approval
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Monday 9 February

- **Formal Cabinet Meeting**
- Full day **officer briefing sessions** on upcoming decisions
- Evening **Reform Group meeting** explaining the proposed budget to party members

Tuesday 10 February

- **Cabinet Budget Meeting – all day**, reviewing and approving final recommendations

Wednesday 11 February

- **Dungeness Nuclear Task Force meeting in London**, attended with Tony Vaughan and Jim Martin joining remotely
- Chairing the **Kent Leaders Group** on behalf of the Leader

Thursday 12 February

- **8am Reform group meeting**
- **Full Council Budget Meeting – 10am to 6pm**

Friday 13 February

- **Kent and Medway Economic Partnership meeting**
 - Presentation and discussion of the **Local Growth Plan**
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Monday 16 February

- Cabinet meeting with **Fischer and Dave Charles** regarding **construction safety standards**
- Strategic meeting with **Last Energy** regarding **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) at Dungeness**
- Evening meeting – **Folkestone & Hythe Joint Transportation Board**

Tuesday 17 February

- Meeting with a **St Mary's Bay resident** regarding a dangerous tree issue
- **Maidstone East Strategic Board Meeting**
- **Kent Fire and Rescue briefing**

Wednesday 18 February

- Meeting with the **Deputy Leader**
- Strategic discussion regarding **KCC business loan programmes**
- Meeting with officers and Jim Martin regarding **Otterpool Park development**
- General portfolio update meetings

Thursday 19 February

- **Business Advisory Board meeting in Folkestone**
- Strategic briefing on the **Lower Thames Crossing**

Friday 20 February

- **Site visit to Manston Airport** regarding a proposed **hydrogen energy plant**
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Monday 23 February

- **Cabinet Meeting**
- **Monthly Dungeness New Nuclear meeting**
- Update regarding the **Dungeness Skills Centre**
- **Otterpool action meeting** with officers

Tuesday 24 February

- **Business loans debt recovery meeting**
- **Ukrainian 4th anniversary gathering**
- **Armed Forces presentation**

Wednesday 25 February

- Delivered **Keynote Speech at Ashford International** for the **Kent & Medway Employment, Skills and Health Summit**
- Evening travel – **six-hour drive to Manchester** to support a by-election campaign

Thursday 26 February

- **5.30am dawn vote reminder campaign** in Manchester
- Lunchtime **online meeting with Steven Soames** regarding a proposed **Romney Marsh business park**
- Departed Manchester at **5.30pm**, arriving home around **11.20pm**

Friday 27 February

- **8am officer briefing on the Lower Thames Crossing**
 - **Site visit to Panattoni Lenham Business Park**
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A Typical Month

What is listed above is actually a fairly typical month. Alongside these meetings I also deal with **district council matters, constituent casework and local issues**, which often take place in the evenings or at weekends. These can range from planning concerns and highways issues to supporting local businesses and community organisations.

While the schedule can be demanding, it is also incredibly rewarding to work on projects that will shape Kent's future – from **energy and infrastructure investment to economic development and job creation**.

As always, if residents have concerns or ideas they would like to raise, please feel free to get in touch. Hearing directly from the community remains one of the most important parts of the role.